REMARKS

Claims 1-8 are pending, including independent claims 1 and 7. All claims were again rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over USP 6,496,205 ("White") and USP 6,606,465 ("Mutoh"). Applicant has amended these claims to further clarify the invention and distinguish over the cited art.

Applicant's claimed invention generally is directed to a vehicle navigation method and apparatus for displaying a menu on a screen, where the menu items correspond to functions that can be executed by selecting a menu item. If it is determined that a function corresponding to a displayed menu item cannot be executed, that menu item is disabled from being selected, and a reason why the menu item cannot be selected is displayed. With this invention, a user can easily understand why a particular function cannot be executed, and the user does not become confused or think the vehicle navigation apparatus is broken when it is not (see the application at, e.g., p. 6, line 28 to p. 7, line 9; p. 8, lines 15-26).

Claim 1 has been amended to recite that it relates to a method of operating a vehicle navigation apparatus, and to add the contents of dependent claim 4 which generally recites that when only a predetermined amount of data can be registered in a memory and when said predetermined amount of data is already registered in said memory, a message indicating that said menu item cannot be selected due to memory limitations is displayed in the field of said menu item for registering data. Claim 4 has been canceled as redundant. Claim 5 has been amended for clarification.

Independent claim 7 has been amended to recite that it is directed to a vehicle navigation apparatus, and to add language corresponding to claim 6, i.e., that in the field of said menu item corresponding to a function which can be executed only while said navigation apparatus performs route guiding, when said route guidance is not in progress, a message indicating that said menu item cannot be selected due to the fact that route guiding is not in progress is displayed.

New claims 9-12 have been added. Independent claim 9 corresponds to amended claim 1, except that instead of adding the contents of dependent claim 4, the contents of dependent claim 5 have been added to recite that when data that is set in a

memory is to be read to have a predetermined function executed and when no data is set in said memory, a message indicating that said menu item cannot be selected due to no data being set in said memory is displayed in the field of said menu item for registering data. Dependent claims 10-12 correspond to dependent claims 2, 3 and 6, respectively.

Applicant submits that the present claims are patentable over the cited art. White, the primary reference, is directed to a user interface for controlling audio functions in a web browser. If audio data is available to be played, an audio panel 154 is displayed on the screen and includes software buttons for controlling the audio data (see Fig. 8B). If no audio data is available to be played, the audio panel 154 simply is not displayed. (See, e.g., col. 14, line 66 to col. 15, line 53.) As the Examiner notes, White does not display a reason explaining why a function cannot be selected.

The Examiner contends that Mutoh displays a reason why a menu item cannot be selected, but Applicant disagrees. The Figure and passage relied on by the Examiner (Figs. 5A-D; col. 10, lines 24-40) only vaguely suggest that the facsimile transmission function of the equipment is not available (see display area 32c in Fig. 5D; col. 10, lines 40-50), i.e., only that the function is disabled. Mutoh, like White, does not describe or suggest that a reason is displayed to explain why the function cannot be selected. Thus, there is the possibility that the user becomes frustrated and confused because he/she does not know why the function is disabled and may wrongly think the equipment is broken. In particular, Applicant disagrees with the Examiner's statement that Mutoh "fully realizes" this feature. In Mutoh, displaying a message that no job request other than the facsimile function will be accepted only tells the user the fact that the other functions (copier, printer) are not available, and does not display a reason why the other functions are not available.

In addition, all claims now recite that they are directed to a method or apparatus for vehicle navigation. Neither White nor Mutoh describes or suggests that the relevant features relied upon by the Examiner should be used in connection with a vehicle navigation system.

The cited references also do not describe or suggest the additional, final limitation of amended claim 1. In this feature, if the menu item is for registering data in a memory and the memory is already full, "a message indicating that said menu item cannot be selected due to memory limitations is displayed in the field of said menu item" on the screen. Applicant respectfully submits that the passage of Mutoh relied upon the by Examiner (col. 10, lines 25-51) in fact does not describe, and indeed does not have anything to do with, Applicant's specific claimed feature.
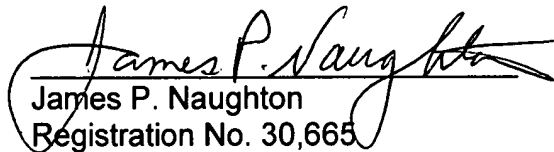
The cited references also do not describe or suggest the additional, final limitation of amended independent claim 7. In this feature, if the menu item is for a function which can only be executed while the navigation apparatus is performing route guidance, when route guidance is not in progress a message is displayed indicating that the menu item cannot be selected because of this fact. Clearly, neither White nor Mutoh describe or suggest this feature in a vehicle navigation apparatus. Although the Examiner relies on Tamai (Fig. 8, col. 2., lines 25-5 [sic]) to show a map navigation apparatus, Tamai also does not describe or suggest Applicant's specific feature.

The cited references also do not describe or suggest newly added independent claim 9, particularly the final limitation of the claim which corresponds to dependent claim 5. In this feature, if the menu item is for a function that cannot be executed if no data is set in a memory, and no data is set in the memory, "a message indicating that said menu item cannot be selected due to no data being set in said memory is displayed in the field of said menu item." Applicant submits that the passages of White relied upon by the Examiner (col. 15, lines 15-30, 54-67) in fact do not describe or suggest Applicant's specific claimed feature. In White, if audio data is not available to be played, the audio panel 154 in Fig. 8B is simply not shown, as seen in Fig. 8A (see col. 15, lines 15-29). No message is displayed indicating that menu items cannot be selected due to no data being set in memory.

The dependent claims are patentable for at least the reasons stated above for the independent claims.

In summary, Applicant submits that the claims, as amended, are patentable over the cited art, and Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

James P. Naughton
Registration No. 30,665
Attorney for Applicant

BRINKS HOFER GILSON & LIONE
P.O. BOX 10395
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60610
(312) 321-4200